

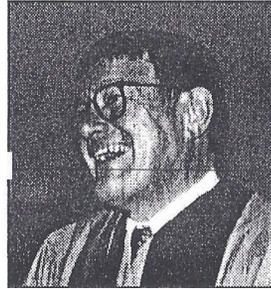
Colors mark seasons of church and life

Each of us has times and seasons in our lives. The good news is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes fulfilling and healing sense of our personal seasons. As we grow in Christian life, that profound relevance is confirmed in unique ways to each of us.

God's faithfulness meets us when we are young, when we are older, and when we are at the middle. We need the centering good news of Jesus Christ when we are successful and when we are failing at some goal or work or relationship. There is a rhythm that needs keeping. The longer I live my Christian life, the more I discover a basic biblically-affirmed balance that is built into our week (six days thou shalt labor; one thou shalt rest) and also into our year.

IF THERE are seasons in our individual lives, there are also seasons in our Christian fellowship. Through the ages, since the earliest days of the Christian church, these times have become special seasons of the Christian year. Just as Israel marked each year with the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah, so the early Christians framed each year with the feasts and times of the Gospel as its life-giving message infolds to and within us.

The Christian year begins each late fall with Advent, the



From Your Minister

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candle which begins Christmastide, and the color of bright white reminds us of the Lordship of Christ as our King. This color also is the color of Eastertide and helps us to remember and celebrate the victory of Christ over death.

LENT IS the season of six Sundays (seven weeks) before Easter and here, as in Advent, the color is purple; we ponder the costly grace of Jesus of Nazareth, and we reflect upon our

four Sundays before Christmas. These are days of waiting, preparation and eager expectation. We light the four Advent candles one by one and the color for these weeks is purple to remind us of our need to humbly prepare by repentance as we look forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Christmas Eve we light the white center candle which begins Christmastide, and the color of bright white reminds us of the Lordship of Christ as our King. This color also is the color of Eastertide and helps us to remember and celebrate the victory of Christ over death.

own individual journeys of faith. Solemnity and respectful reserve especially mark these weeks of inner reflection and preparation.

Red is the color of Pentecost Sunday, which is the seventh Sunday after Easter. On this Sunday we celebrate the confirmation of Christ's grace in our lives by the Holy Spirit. We remember the gift of assurance given to the early church on that first day of Pentecost.

FOR ALL OTHER Sundays of the year, the Christian church uses the color green, which symbolizes the reign of Jesus Christ over all of history and over all of life. Our Lord is the Alpha and Omega who boundaries each of our times with his grace and faithfulness.

These Christian-year markers and the colors that go with them help us to keep our lives rhythmic as we live through the seasons of our own journey. It is the good rhythm of respectful repentance, joyous celebration, thoughtful contemplation and responsible discipleship.

I especially appreciate the decision made by the church many years ago to choose colors to go with our journey of faith throughout the year because each of us needs more balance in our ordinary lives, and we need color, too.